Collaboration with Australia in mining operation

894. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether some Australian companies are keen to. operate some mining projects in the country in collaboration with some Indian Companies both in public and private sectors;

(b) if so, their specific details along with the name of the ruitses for which such collaboration are proposed and when;

(c) the present progress on establishing joint collaboration between both India ant! Australia in mining operation; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINIS (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Foreign Investment Promotion Board has approved 9 foreign direct investment proposals from Australian companies in the mining sector amounting to about Rs. 1250 crores. The approval granted by the FIPB is only for foreign equity participation in companies incorporated in India. This approval does not, in any way, confer a right on the company receiving such foreign equity participation to begin prospecting/mining activities. Prospecting and mining rights are granted by the concerned State Governments in accordance with the provisions of the Mines and Minerals [Regulation & Development] Act, 1957 and Rules framed thereunder. Prior approval of the Central Government is required only for Minerals in the First Schedule and also in cases of aerial prospecting. The Central Government has so far approved aerial survey over large areas aggregating 39466.155 sq kms. to Indian companies who have received equity from Australia or who have joint ventures with Australian companies. This includes a collaboration between M/s BHP Minerals International Exploration Inc., Australia (BHP) and Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL). a Public Sector Undertaking under the Department of Mines. HZL and BHP have already completed aerial survey over a large area in Rajasthan.

Revamping of Rourkela Steel plant

895. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a pro posal to revamp the working of Rourkela Steel Plant;

(b) if so, the programmes drawn up thereon;

(c) the steps taken in that direction; and

(d) the oetaits tncreof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) to (d) Modernisation schemes in Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) are at an advanced stage of completion. The modernised units are under stabilisation. A programme for revamping the working of RSP has been drawn up, which, inter-alia, includes stabilisation of modernised units to achieve rated capacity by 1999-2000; reduction in the cost of production; improving the marketability of products by producing as per the market requirement; reducing the wastages and afisings; and gainful utilisation of the wastes by recycling and sales, etc.

Some of the actions taken by the Steel Authority ot India Limited (SAIL), inter-alia, include improving operational parameters; optimisation of consumption rates, gainful utilisation of solid wastes; improving yield, etc. and constitution of Departmental and Cross Functional Committees for regular reviews to achieve the desired results. The Government on its part at various levels monitors the prog- ress periodically.